



State of Arizona

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Governor Jan Brewer Signs Compromise Legislation to Preserve Astronomy, Billboard Industries

Measure Includes Buffers, other Provisions to Preserve Arizona Observatories

PHOENIX – Governor Jan Brewer today signed into law HB 2543, compromise legislation that protects Arizona’s critical astronomy installations while making reasonable accommodations for new technology in the billboard industry. The Governor had vetoed an earlier bill that she felt placed Arizona observatories at risk, and called astronomy and billboard stakeholders to the table at that time in order to reach a compromise.

“I’m happy that members of these two important industries worked in good faith to reach a mutually-agreeable compromise,” said Governor Brewer. “The legislation I proudly signed into law today reflects a balance struck between Arizona astronomers and outdoor advertisers that will allow both industries to flourish. I commend these industries – as well as Rep. Robson and legislative leaders – for working together to preserve two of Arizona’s important economic drivers.”

HB 2543 will permit the retention of 70 electronic billboards already in use in public rights-of-way along state highways. The measure establishes rules and guidelines governing the placement of new electronic billboards in public rights-of-way, including prohibitions to help preserve dark skies near critical observatories.

Specifically, HB 2543 will allow for the placement of electronic billboards in metro parts of Central and Western Arizona, while prohibiting their construction in delineated “buffer zones” near the State’s existing observatories – namely the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff; Kitt Peak National Observatory outside of Tucson; and Mount Graham National Observatory near Safford.

Other legislative provisions include limits on the level of illumination that electronic billboards may emit, as well as a requirement that they be turned off at 11 p.m. in order to help preserve our dark night skies.

“We appreciate the Governor’s help in mitigating the harm from increasing light pollution, so our nation’s scientific, defense and educational interests can continue to benefit from the world-class observatories that have been in our State for over a century,” said Jeff Hall, Director of the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff. “Staff in the Governor’s Office, as well as ADOT, have worked hard and in good faith over the past month to ensure the prohibitions in the statute banning electronic billboards outside the allowed area are solid. Based on their assurances, we feel we can accept the compromise amendment, and we look forward to working with them and local jurisdictions in the future as we continue to strive to protect Arizona’s night skies.”

“This bill shows that two opposite sides can work together toward a common goal, and with positive results,” said Rep. Bob Robson (R-LD20), who led legislative efforts for the bill. “This legislation proves these industries can co-exist.”

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